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# LETTER DATED 9 NOVEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a statement dated 27 October 1998 by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Regional Cooperation) of Uganda, Mr. Amama Mbabazi, delivered at the Regional Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence held at Lusaka on 26 and 27 October 1998, on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The statement clarified Uganda's position on the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Semakula KIWANUKA
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Uganda
to the United Nations

Annex

Statement dated 27 October 1998 by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Regional Cooperation) of Uganda, Mr. Amama Mbabazi, to the Ministerial Meeting on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, held at Lusaka on 26 and 27 October 1998

Following the many provocative statements made during this meeting, especially by the delegations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola, Uganda has been obliged to state its position clearly on the current political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ever since the Victoria Falls talks, one of the main features of our efforts has been to put the definition of the problem into its rightful perspective.

In the first Victoria Falls talks of 7 August 1998, our President circulated a booklet detailing Uganda's involuntary involvement in the conflicts in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. The common factor among all these conflicts is the refusal by those in power to use dialogue in order to solve very serious injustices and, instead, to resort to using force to frustrate the aspirations of sections of the people and, sometimes, the whole community. In Uganda, where a lot of violence has taken place in the past 32 years, we have always combined resisting injustice with force and also with dialogue. Sometimes we fight; sometimes we talk. That is how Uganda has recovered.

The present conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be wound down by dialogue among the Congolese and those backing the respective Congolese protagonists. The issues are quite clear. Some are internal; some are regional. The internal issues appear to be the following:

- Internal democracy within individual Congolese political organizations (e.g., the defection of Bugera, Karaha, etc.); a broad-based interim administration (we have not heard of any inter-party conference); justice (Mr. Tshisekedi being sent into "internal exile", for instance); tendencies towards genocide (our troops in eastern Congo have come across many massacres committed before our arrival and there were threats of more had we not arrived); building a non-partisan army rather than relying on tribal militias that make other political forces nervous; and charting the democratic path for the country by a broad spectrum of Congolese society.

On tendencies towards genocide, there is evidence of extrajudicial massacres in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This evidence exists in Kisangani, Bunia and Moba. In Isiro, machetes were distributed in preparation for a possible genocide publicized by the Kabila Government officials on radio and TV. This was done by those in authority before the RCD rebels captured Isiro.

By the time our troops (Uganda contingent) subsequently arrived in Isiro, we were greeted by the population with a sense of relief and shown scores of machetes and told gruesome stories of the genocide that was to be implemented had the town of Isiro not fallen to the RCD rebels. We have also halted the designs by the Kabila Government to bring Sudanese troops and Uganda's Sudan-based rebels of the West Nile Bank Front, UNFR II and Lord's Resistance Army to operate against Uganda in the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The original problems affected Rwanda (ex-FAR and Interahamwe), Angola (Savimbi) and Uganda (Sudan activities, especially the ADF). Our support for the anti-Mobutu campaign was actually because of that problem. However, our involvement against Mobutu was also partly because of the impending genocide against Banyamulenge. Rwanda was more involved on that particular issue.

There is one opinion which we do not accept. That opinion is that a Government, because it is ruling over a sovereign country, like the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Uganda, has a right, if it so chooses, to exterminate any group of people within that country. According to this opinion, Rwanda, Uganda and other countries were wrong to oppose Mobutu's genocidal schemes over the Banyamulenge. The United Republic of Tanzania was wrong to oppose Idi Amin in the 1970s because he was just killing Ugandans who were his subjects. The Americans and others are wrong in opposing genocide in Bosnia; many of us have been wrong in opposing the slow genocide of black people in the Sudan. Indeed we were wrong to oppose the regimes of Ian Smith and the Boers because they were also claiming the cover of sovereignty since Boer South Africa, at least, was a Member of the United Nations.

Our political movement has never agreed with this vulgarization of the concept of sovereignty of the State. There are certain matters that must be universal. Among these, we can cite two: sovereignty of the population and not just the regimes, and the inviolability of the sanctity of life, especially the banishment of genocide and extrajudicial killings.

Therefore, while we recognize the sovereignty of States and we support the inviolability of borders inherited at independence, we oppose the violation of an even more fundamental sovereignty, the sovereignty of the people, most particularly by the genocidaires. Some people ask: "Why should Uganda arrogate to itself the role of stopping genocide in the Great Lakes region?" The answer is that in 1994 in Rwanda 1 million Africans were massacred and nobody did anything.

The genocide only stopped when the Rwandese Patriotic Front swept the rotten gang of killers out of power and out of the country. The same thing would have happened to the Banyamulenge last year but one, if the Rwanda Army and the Banyamulenge themselves had not acted in time. In Uganda, during the time of Amin and Obote, 800,000 Ugandans were killed. In the Luwero Triangle there are 30 mass graves. This genocide only stopped when we defeated the criminal regimes of Obote and Okello. We were supported by a few friends like the Tanzanians in our lonely struggle. In East Africa, some countries have therefore resolved that we shall never tolerate genocide again. It is this

resolve that has, for instance, deterred the leaders of the Burundi junta from launching a new genocide.

On the question of not interfering in the "internal affairs" of sovereign States: First of all, Uganda was rescued by the "interfering in those internal affairs" by our Tanzanian brothers and others. Secondly, H.E. Kabila was put in power by, especially, Rwanda, but also others, "interfering" in the "internal affairs" of Mobutu's Congo to defend themselves but also to help the Congolese patriots. If you reject "interfering in internal affairs" under all circumstances, then the Government of H.E. Kabila should resign and we should install Likulia Bolongo, the last Prime Minister of President Mobutu. Otherwise, we become inconsistent and we transform the otherwise laudable principle of non-interference into a charade behind which we commit evil.

There has been talk that there are good and bad foreign countries that are involved in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The so-called good countries are those invited by President Kabila; those countries have sent troops that are fighting on President Kabila's side. The so-called bad countries are those that are alleged to be supporting the rebels or the ordinary people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are convinced that foreign interference is bad. It becomes even worse when those foreign forces support one faction or the other in a country and end up distorting the politics of that country. Foreign intervention can only be positive if it promotes national reconciliation and national harmony. Our view is that all foreign troops should leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The withdrawal should be done after a ceasefire and when neutral multinational forces have taken up positions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to supervise strict observance of the ceasefire and ensure the security of the neighbouring countries.

The problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is essentially political and requires a political settlement between Kabila's Government and the entire Congolese opposition (both armed and non-armed). This necessitates an internally negotiated political settlement, with the regional countries, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations acting as guarantors to the political process.

Therefore this process we have been undergoing since Victoria Falls I should be geared towards a comprehensive and permanent solution to the current crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We should not lose track. We should address the issues before us and bring peace to our region.

Yes, it is a fact that some neighbouring countries to the Democratic Republic of the Congo have legitimate security concerns emanating from the latter's territory. Indeed, the heads of State have not only discussed the issue but also pronounced themselves on it. At their summits in Victoria Falls, Durban and Nairobi, among others, the heads of State recognized that there are security concerns of neighbouring countries to the Democratic Republic of the Congo that need to be addressed within a comprehensive framework for a permanent solution to the problem. As alluded to above, Uganda's security concerns did not start with President Kabila's Democratic Republic of the Congo. President Kabila's Government was itself partly a direct result of our security concerns. During the Mobutu era, Mobutu in collaboration with the Sudan chose

to give support to Ugandan rebels who had a programme to destabilize Uganda. Beginning in 1995, we experienced frequent attacks launched from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

When Mobutu was ousted, we had hoped that our concerns would be addressed by the new authorities in Kinshasa. Unfortunately, this did not happen. We continued to experience the attacks under President Kabila's Government. Of course, we did not expect an improvement to occur so soon because of capacity constraints by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That is why the two countries reached a mutual arrangement that led to our military presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The situation was not helped when the current rebellion broke out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 2 August 1998. Uganda was compelled not to leave a vacuum lest the Sudan take advantage of the situation and intensify its support activities to Uganda rebels on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, the Sudan has since mobilized more Ugandan rebel factions and moved them to the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the aim of launching massive attacks on Uganda.

We all know of the military incursions that have been inflicted upon Uganda by the Sudan. These include the annual aerial bombardments and cross-border incursions on Ugandan territory. Initially, the Sudan was using its own territory as the launching pad for Ugandan rebels. When they lost it to the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Sudanese People's Liberation Army, they began increasingly to use the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is evidence that during the fight for Kindu between the Democratic Republic of the Congo forces and Congolese rebels, the latter captured many Ugandan rebels backed by the Sudan.

Lastly, although the Interahamwe and ex-FAR are Rwandese, we are afraid they constitute a regional threat. For example in Garamba Park (Democratic Republic of the Congo), between the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, the Interahamwe and ex-FAR were training together with Ugandan rebels to destabilize Uganda. Only recently, the Interahamwe massacred over 1 million people in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. We are therefore surprised that statements were made during the present meeting in support of genocidaires as liberators.

All these concerns are real and they must be addressed so that we may be judged by posterity. On its part, Uganda is ready to pull out of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as soon as measures that guarantee our security are put in place.

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